

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI

Pastor Mark Gartner

Sermon for Trinity Sunday – June 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011

**Matthew 28:16-20.**

**“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**”

Dear Christian brothers and sisters,

Have you ever wondered just a little, is there another way to heaven besides grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ? Have you ever wondered if people from other false religions will be in heaven? To make this a little more personal, what would happen if you told someone that only Christians were going to go to heaven and so the Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and all others who did not believe in Jesus were not? Chance are, if you made such a statement, that person might become angry and challenge you by saying something like, “What right do you have to say such a thing?” This may lead us to have doubts as to whether this type of teaching truly is a fact. This teaching is certainly going to be too much for many people to accept. But to get to the heart of this dilemma, we need to ask ourselves the question, do we have authority or the right to be so sure and certain that without faith in Jesus there is no salvation? The answer is a confident and very bold, yes! But how do we know this is true?

To find the answer to this question and many other questions, we are going to let Jesus himself give us the answer using the words that he spoke at the very end of his life, just before he ascended back into heaven. These departing words that Jesus spoke to his disciples were not just meant for them, but they are meant to bring us strength and assurance as we continue to do the Lord's work here in 2011. In the words of our text, Jesus tells us:

**Theme: By The Authority of the Trinity, Jesus Commands You**

- 1. To go and make disciples of all nations**
- 2. To baptize in the name of the Triune God**
- 3. To teach them to obey all Jesus commanded;**
- 4. To trust that you work by his authority and with his presence!**

**1. To go and make disciples of all nations;**

Matthew tells us, **“When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.”** The Greek can be translated “these doubted” or that “some doubted”. Who doubted here? That the disciples might doubt though they had seen the risen Lord is understandable. The disciples knew Jesus as a man, to be sure a man with special powers, who had risen from the dead, but was he truly God? We can be sure that each disciple there had doubt because every Christian will doubt, for no one has perfect faith. Have you ever doubted something in the Bible? Has your sense of reason ever led you to question something from Scripture, some teaching? If not, you are very unique, if so, join the crowd.

God in his great love and wisdom forgives doubt. Jesus did not condemn his followers who doubted, but rather he gave them assurance to cast aside doubt. We are told, **“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”** This simple statement helps to cast aside any doubt that Jesus is true God. Only God has all authority in heaven and on earth and that also belongs to Jesus. No mere man could ever hold that authority, but Jesus, the God-Man does.

This is not the first time Jesus spoke of his authority. On the night he was betrayed, John tells us in John 17:1-2, Jesus prayed, **“Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For**

**you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.”** That was the authority to go to the cross and take the sins of the world upon himself and to pay the just penalty for those sins as he gave his life on the cross. Jesus never asked a single human being if he could do that. He has the power and authority to reach 2,000 years into the future to you and take your sins off of you and put them on himself.

In Ephesians 1:20-23, Paul tells us , **“God raised Jesus from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”** This statement is the assurance of our Triune God that God the Father accepted the work of his Son to die for our sins. It is the statement that in perfect unity the Trinity agreed that Jesus the Son of God now reigns as the ascended God-Man with all authority over all things for the good of his church.

Jesus told us about all authority being given him for a purpose, for then he says, **“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...”** The little word **“therefore”** is used to say, based on this authority, I am going to give you some work to do. Really, Jesus issued his command. A disciple is a follower of Jesus, a believer. He tells us to go and make disciples of all nations, all people. He does not leave out a single soul. He does not leave out babies or old people, one race or another, but includes all people. In the rest of this reading, Jesus explains how we are to make disciples of all nations and that is by baptizing and teaching. This command was given to you. Are you obeying it? You are obeying this command as you share your faith, as you support the work of our congregation and synod. Whenever you are going out into this world with God’s Good News, you are part of the process of making disciples of all nations.

## **2. To baptize in the name of our Triune God;**

What does it mean to **“go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”** The English does not completely explain the point of the original language. In the Greek the meaning is “go and make disciples of all nations by baptizing them.” The Holy Spirit alone creates faith to believe in Jesus. The Holy Spirit uses the means or tools of the Word and the Sacraments to do this. You and I do not create faith or bring anyone to faith, but we are God’s messengers and servants as we baptize and teach by the authority of Christ, who says this is going out and making disciples. This is a promise, backed by the authority of the Trinity and the command of our Savior, that baptism does something, it makes a person a believer.

Appreciate the power of that promise found in baptism, for it means that God, who is the author of faith, allows us to be his instruments to bring saving faith even to an infant. What a glorious joyous promise it is that a baby who cannot confess faith and who cannot speak a word of understanding, can be brought instantly to saving faith. This is saving faith because it is a baptism into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, which is a description of the true God – the Trinity. The point of baptizing into the three persons of God is to baptize them into the true God, the Triune God. The purpose of baptizing a baby into the name of the Trinity is to place the child into the family of the Trinity. That comes about only by God working saving faith.

That we should baptize babies is made clear in the simple command, “Therefore, based on all authority given to Jesus, go and make disciples of all peoples.” It does not say, “make disciples of all peoples except babies.” God gives us the gift of baptism for our comfort to know that a baptized baby is a Christian baby, but our work is not done with the baptism, for Jesus commands us to also make disciples by teaching them to obey all he has commanded

## **3. To teach them to obey all Jesus commanded;**

God says in Romans 10:17, **“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”** God the Holy Spirit uses the Word to bring those to faith who can hear it. We are to teach all that Jesus commanded us. Jesus commands us what to believe on every page of Scripture,

for every line, every word, every syllable of Scripture is God's Word, not the mere words of a man. 2 Peter 1:20-21, **"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."** No wonder that Jesus speaking by the authority of the Trinity commands you and me to go and make disciples, **"by teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."**

The struggle for most of us is the promise that simply and faithfully teaching the word of God is all Jesus wants from us. It is sometimes a struggle to believe that the teaching of God's Word, his law and his gospel, will make believers out of sinners. But you have the word of Christ on it and the authority of the Trinity backing you when you tell someone what Jesus commanded. God does not give you or me permission to teach only what we want or like or think. He wants us to teach all he commanded. He also wants you to be a disciple and believe all he commanded. You are a disciple of Christ. Are you willing to teach by your own mouth as you tell others the truth about all Jesus commands? Are you willing to support every effort to proclaim the wonders of God in all its truth and purity? That is the work and privilege and responsibility we have as God's disciples as we go and make disciples of all nations.

Parents, are you teaching your children to obey all that Jesus commands? Adults, are you making the effort to learn all that Jesus commanded and to grow in faith to obey those commands? Some of the ways the congregation helps you is to provide home devotion material, like the Meditations. We also have a Christian Day School and a Sunday school, and we can have three worship services so that we can find time for regular church attendance where we feed our souls the spiritual nourishment that we all need as we go and make disciples of all nations.

#### **4. To trust that you work by his authority and with his presence!**

But even when our faith is strong, there is that struggle with doubts. When you struggle with doubt remember what Jesus says, **"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."** In saying **"I am"** with you, Jesus is making one of the great **"I AM"** statements of the Bible. Remember that the God appeared to Moses at the burning bush and told him that his name was **"I AM"**, which is "Yahweh." God is the great **"I AM"** because he never changes, he never breaks a promise. Here Jesus is claiming his deity in taking the title **"I AM"** and he promises he is with you always.

Remember this as you teach others and as you support the true teaching of all Jesus commanded by doing the work of spreading the gospel. Remember that you work by the authority of Christ and under his promise that **"Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."** When you dare to speak to a family member who has not come to faith and rejects anything Christian, remember that as you speak, Jesus is promising he is with you. He is with you because he dwells within the heart of every believer. He never leaves you alone.

Do you and I have the authority to teach others that the only way of salvation is through faith in Christ Jesus and that all the followers of all other religions will be damned eternally? Absolutely we do for that is why God tells you that **by the authority of the Trinity, Jesus commands you: to go and make disciples of all nations; by baptizing into the name of our Triune God; by teaching them to obey all Jesus commanded; trusting that you work by his authority and with his presence! To God be all glory, amen!**